

Claims:

1. A method for automatically filling tablets into tablet containers comprising at least one tablet compartment for receiving tablets, characterized by:  
receiving a patient order containing a patient identification (PAT-ID) and at least one prescription comprising prescription data (REZ) regarding the types of tablets to be taken by the patient and instructions for taking said tablets;  
allocating the prescription data (REZ) and patient identification (PAT-ID) to respective tablet containers (1);  
automatically filling at least one tablet compartment (2) of a respective tablet container (1) by means of at least one automatic tablet dispenser (50) containing supplies of a plurality of tablet types,  
wherein the number of tablets of the respective types of tablets to be taken by a patient at certain times is determined from the prescription data (REZ) and a tablet compartment (2) of a tablet container (1) is allocated to each determined time for taking the tablets and the tablets thus determined are filled for each determined time for taking them into the respective tablet compartment (2) that has been allocated;  
sealing and delivering the filled tablet containers (1).
2. A tablet filling method according to claim 1, characterized in that the allocation of prescription data (REZ) and patient identification (PAT-ID) to respective tablet containers (1) comprises the transmission of prescription data and patient identification to one or several information carriers (11) and the allocation of a respective information carrier to one tablet container (1) at a time.
3. A tablet filling method according to claim 2, characterized in that an electronic data carrier, which preferably is writable and readable in a contactless manner, or a printable substrate such as a bar-code label is provided as an information carrier (11).
4. A tablet filling method according to claim 2 or 3, characterized in that the automatic filling of at least one tablet compartment (2) of a respective tablet container (1) by at least one automatic tablet dispenser (50) comprises conveying the tablet containers (1) and the information carriers (11) allocated thereto jointly through the at least one automatic tablet dispenser;  
reading out the prescription data stored on the information carrier (11) by the respective automatic tablet dispenser (50);

checking by means of the respective automatic tablet dispenser (50) as to whether the supplies of tablet types stored in it correspond to one of the tablet types contained in the prescription data (REZ) and, in case of correspondence, determining the number of tablets of the respective types of tablets to be taken by the patient at certain times and allocating a tablet compartment (2) to each determined time for taking the tablets, and filling the determined tablets into the respective tablet compartment that has been allocated.

5. A tablet filling method according to any of the preceding claims, characterized in that, upon receiving the patient order, a plausibility check of the prescription data (REZ) regarding a possible overdosage and the mutual compatibility between tablet types is carried out and, in case an overdosage or an incompatibility is detected, the patient order is rejected.

6. A tablet filling method according to any of the preceding claims, characterized in that the tablet containers (1) are provided with information derived from the prescription data (REZ), such as instructions for taking the tablets, and/or the patient identification (PAT-ID), preferably by imprinting or labelling the tablet container (1).

7. A tablet filling method according to any of the preceding claims, characterized in that, if errors occur during the implementation of the tablet filling process for a tablet container, the tablet filling process is stopped and the tablet container is eliminated.

8. A tablet filling method according to claim 7 in connection with any of claims 2 or 3, characterized in that, if errors occur during the implementation of the tablet filling process for a tablet container, error identifications are written onto the information carrier (11) allocated to said tablet container and tablet containers marked with error identifications in this way are eliminated during the delivery.

9. A tablet filling method according to claim 8, characterized in that, prior to each processing step of the tablet filling process, it is checked for each tablet container (1) as to whether the information carrier (11) allocated to said tablet container contains an error identification and, upon detection of such an error identification, the respective processing step is not carried out.

10. A tablet filling method according to any of the preceding claims, characterized in that the delivery of the filled tablet containers comprises collecting all tablet containers belonging to a respective patient order.

11. A system for automatically filling tablets into tablet containers comprising at least one tablet compartment for receiving tablets, characterized by:  
reception means (30) for receiving a patient order containing a patient identification (PAT-ID) and at least one prescription comprising prescription data (REZ) regarding the types of tablets to be taken by the patient and instructions for taking said tablets;  
allocation means (40) for allocating the prescription data (REZ) and patient identification (PAT-ID) to respective tablet containers (1);  
at least one automatic tablet dispenser (50) containing supplies of a plurality of tablet types for automatically filling at least one tablet compartment of a respective tablet container, wherein the allocation means (40) or the automatic tablet dispenser (50) is/are designed for determining, from the prescription data (REZ), the number of tablets of the respective types of tablets to be taken by a patient at certain times and for allocating a tablet compartment (2) of a tablet container (1) to each determined time for taking the tablets, and the automatic tablet dispenser (50) is designed for filling the tablets thus determined for each determined time for taking them into the tablet compartment (2) of the respective tablet container (1), which compartment has been allocated;  
closing means (70) for sealing the filled tablet containers (1).

12. A tablet filling system according to claim 11, characterized in that the allocation means (40) are designed for transmitting the prescription data (REZ) and patient identification (PAT-ID) to one or several information carriers (11) and for allocating a respective information carrier (11) to one tablet container (1) at a time.

13. A tablet filling system according to claim 12, characterized in that the information carrier (11) is an electronic data carrier, which preferably is writable and readable in a contactless manner, or a printable substrate such as a bar-code label.

14. A tablet filling system according to claim 12 or 13, characterized in that the automatic tablet dispenser (50) is designed for reading out the prescription data (REZ) stored on the information carrier (11) and for filling tablets into tablet compartments (2) of the tablet container (1) allocated to the information carrier (11) according to the number of tablets of the respective types of tablets to be taken by the patient at certain times, which number is determinable from the prescription data (REZ).

15. A tablet filling system according to any of claims 11 to 14, characterized in that for each tablet container (1) a support facility (10) is provided on which the tablet container is conveyable through the tablet filling system.

16. A tablet filling system according to claim 15 in connection with claim 12 or 13, characterized in that the information carrier (11) is placed on the support facility (10).

17. A tablet filling system according to any of claims 11 to 16, characterized in that each automatic tablet dispenser (50) comprises a plurality of tablet dispensing stations (51), each containing a supply of a tablet type and being designed for dispensing an adjustable number of tablets to random tablet compartments (2) of the tablet containers (1).

18. A tablet filling system according to any of claims 11 to 17, characterized in that the reception means (30) are designed for checking the prescription data (REZ) for a possible overdosage and the mutual compatibility between tablet types and for rejecting the patient order in case an overdosage or an incompatibility is detected.

19. A tablet filling system according to any of claims 11 to 18, characterized by printing or labelling means (80) for providing the tablet containers (1) with information derived from the prescription data (REZ), such as instructions for taking the tablets, and/or the patient identification (PAT-ID).

20. A tablet filling system according to claim 12 or 13, wherein the information carriers (11) are designed for receiving error identifications, characterized in that control means (60) are provided which are designed for reading the error identifications from the information carriers (11) and eliminating tablet containers (1) marked with error identifications.

21. A tablet filling system according to any of claims 11 to 20, characterized in that collecting means (90) are provided for collecting all tablet containers (1) belonging to a respective patient order.

22. A tablet filling system according to any of claims 11 to 21, characterized in that each tablet dispensing station (51) comprises a plurality of tablet dispensing units (54) supplied by a common tablet magazine (53), with the tablet dispensing units (54) preferably being designed as rotary dispensing units.

23. A tablet filling system according to claim 22, characterized in that the tablet magazine (53) is connectable to a replaceable buffer container (52).